

# Physical Violence against Women in Jordan: Evaluation of Women Assaulted by Husband

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## Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the characteristics of physical violence against women. One hundred fifteen women who were sent to the national center for forensic medicine for examination were interviewed. The demographic characteristics, time of violence, starting, frequency, and causes of violence, number and presence of children, husband characteristics, time to pursuit normal life were investigated. The data were analyzed using  $\chi^2$  test and percent ratios.

**Key words:** Physical Violence, Women, Jordan, Evaluation, Women Assaulted, Husband.

## Introduction

Violence against women is an issue of concern in the Arab society in general and in Jordan in particular, due to the increasing number of violence cases against women in this area. In Jordan as in many other countries on the international level, violence has become recognized as a significant contribution to ill-health and many other family as well as social problems.

In this world no country or society is free of violence and its related issues, so that this problem has become an international one threatening the lives of the nations and the people. Due to the extent of this widespread problem, people have started viewing it as a human reality that is inescapable and is impossible to threat. Additionally, violence is a very sensitive issue that many people find hard to face, especially since it touches upon issues related to their culture, ideas and predominant beliefs (NCFA, 2005).

Violence against women occurs in every country among all social, cultural, economic, and religious groups. At the societal level, violence against women is most common within cultures where gender roles are strictly defined and enforced; where masculinity is closely associated with toughness, male honor, or dominance; where punishment of women and children is accepted; and where violence is standard way to resolve conflicts (Jewkes, 2002).

Available literature on domestic violence in Jordan indicates that women are more likely to be subjected to violence than male members of the family are. Similarly, studies available provide evidence that forms of violence include physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, economic and social abuse. More specific to the Jordanian society “honor crimes”, early marriages and deprivation of right to inheritance are also practiced in Jordan (Darwazeh, 2008).

Different terms have been used in reports, official inquiries in the debate on the societal problem, which is generally referred to as violence against women.

In Jordan various terms are used by different organizations to refer to the issues of violence including gender based violence (GBV), domestic violence (DV), and violence against women (VAW). The term varies in accordance to the services provided by the different organizations (NCFA, 2005).

In Jordanian society the concept of violence is mixed up with many other concepts with similar indications and meanings like abuse, injury, and harm, with doing harm being the closest to violence. There is no specific visualization of violence in Jordan, despite the consensus that violence is present and is very prominent, although, according to many researchers it is not yet considered a “phenomenon”. The reason is that there are not enough studies which have been conducted on this subject, although some studies that could give us a clear picture on the status of violence in Jordan have been conducted, (NCFA,2005,2008; AL-Ameri, (1994); AL-Ratrout & Atter, (2002); Awawdeh, (1998); Shakhathreh, et al, (2003); Nasser, (1998), in addition to some statistics that are helpful in this study (NCFA,2005) .

In Jordan, this recognition has been accompanied by significant policy attention. Jordan has ratified the major human right instruments. Most relevant are the conventions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW), which were ratified in 1991. Yet Jordan has made reservation on articles 9(2), 15(4) and 16(1), of the CEDAW convention as well as articles 20 and 21 of CRC., (Darwazeh, 2008).

Wife abuse is major psychosocial, health, and human right problem throughout the world (Chokkanathan, 2012). Internationally violence has become recognized as a significant contributor to ill health (WHO, 2002). Violence against partner is a complicated pattern of behavior which may include , physical act , sexual abuse and psychological abuse ( Matalka , 2009,2012 ; Bachman & Saltzman , 1995; Hegarty , et al , 2000 ; UNICEF,2000,2002 ) . A wide rang data collected from 48 studies revealed that women on some stage of their life (10%-69%) have experienced physical violence by their husband. And also showed that (3%to 52 %) of them experienced violence in the past 12 month in the time of the study (WHO, 2001). The effect of such violence on the health, psycho and social life of wife have been recognized (Bergman & Brisnar, 1991; Ellsberg et al. 2000; Haj – Yahia, 2000). It was found that the most forms of violence in home was that against wife , and the information regarding the percentage of wife abuse is limited particularly in developing countries , including Jordan due to the dominant culture that see violence against women as personal matter .

Violence against wife or what called intimate partner violence or domestic violence may be categorized as physical, sexual or psychological violence (Krantz & Moreno, 2005; Watts & Zimmerman 2002). Physical violence is exercised through physical aggressive acts such as kicking , biting , slapping , beating , or even strangling ( Matalka 2009 , 2012 ;UNICEF , 2000 ; Koenig, et al , 2006 ; Naved & person , 2005 ) .

Different studies investigated violence against women in the United States revealed that 2-4 millions women (28 % to 54 .2 %) experience physical violence every year. Studies finding also showed that one out of four families live with domestic violence (Abbot, et al 1995; Novello, et al, 1992). Similar studies conducted is Arab countries showed (26% to 87%) of the Arab women experienced physical violence. ( Matalka , 2009 , 2012 ; Al – Badayneh , 2004 , 2005 b , 2012 ; Haj- Yahia , 1998 b , 2012 ab ; Maziak & Asfar , 2003 ) .

Studies which conducted in the Jordanian society revealed that (25 % to 75 %) of the Jordanian women's have been a victim of physical violence at one stage of their lives. It also showed that more than 65% of the cases experience violence were the husband was the main perpetrator of violence ( Matalka , 2009,2012 ; Al – Badayneh & Al – Shgour , 2009; Okour & Hijazy , 2009 ; Awawdeh , 1998 ; Nadder , 1998 ; Darweesh , 2001 ; Hadidi & Jahshan , 2001 ; Queen Zain Institute , 2002 ; NCFA , 2005 ) .

This study aimed to examine the characteristics of physical violence against woman in the Jordanian society.

## Material and Methods

**Subjects:** The descriptive study of violence against woman in Jordan conducted 115 women who had history of being physically abused by their husband, and were registered as a victim of violence in the family protection department.

The study was conducted between December 25, 2012 and May 30 – 2013 –one hundred sixty seven women who were sent by family protection section to the national center for forensic medicine and its branches all twelve governorate in Jordan for examination and determination of the evidence and effect of physical violence were conducted and asked if they are willing to take part, participate and speak about their experience in this study of physical violence against women in Jordan. One hundred fifteen have accepted to participate in this study.

**Procedures :**To ensure privacy and maintaining quality of research the researchers ask the help of non – Government organization such as Jordanian women's union , Jordan river foundation, Mizan law group who were available in the twelve governorate so that to have the interview in these organization and to a void harassment to the battered women . The safety of participants and interviewer, and the confidentiality of information were taken in to consideration. All the information had been taken with no kids above 3 years, and was in the morning time between 9, 30 to 12 A.M because this time women are usually more free where husband and other member of the family would be either in their job or students at their institutions.

The interviews had been carried out by twelve researchers and three field supervisor who were trained well for the purpose of collecting data .All the interviewers and supervisors were female due to the difficulties of

obtaining information by the researchers themselves, and this encouraged the respondents to participate actively in this study and provide the data required without hesitations.

**Instrument:** A questionnaire was developed by the researchers based on the tool used by Balci & Ayranci, (2005), and consisted of two parts: The first part included the following variables: Ages, place of birth level of education, and profession for both the women and their husbands. The second part included the tool of data collections.

### Findings:

Table 1 present the demographic characteristics of the abused women and their husband (age group, age at marriage, place of birth, level of education and profession). The results shows that majority 40% of the abused woman were in the age group 15-24 years old , and 41.73% of their husband were in the age group 25-34 years old .The difference between the age group of the abused women and their husband was statistically not significant ( $p > 0.01$ ).

As the marriageable age is concern it was found that majority 44.34% of the abused women and 41.73% of their husband got married at the age group of 15-24 years old. The difference between the marriage age of the abused woman and their husband was not significant ( $p > 0.01$ ).

In view of the place of birth of the abused woman and their husband, most of the women 38.60% and 35.65% born in urban areas, followed by 30.43% of the woman and 28.82% of their husband were born in refuges camp. There was no difference between the women and their husband concerning place of birth ( $p > 0.01$ ).

The findings of the present study (table 1) revealed that most of the abused women 60.86% and 61.73% of their husband had twelve class and below education, and 22.60% of the women and 20.86% of their husband had diploma education only. The findings also shows there was no difference between the women and their husband regarding level of education ( $p > 0.01$ ).

The majority of the abused women 70.43% and 18.26% of their husband were unemployed. Even of those assaulted women who are working 20.86% and 45.21% of their husband who assaulted them were working in daily wage basis which it is irregular. The difference between the assaulted women and their husband in view of the profession was statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Analysis of the study showed that 8 families 6.95% of the assaulted women and their husband do not work at all. We also found that 68 families 59.13% lived in rented houses. Most of the families 93 (80.86%) lived in flats consisting of 2-3 rooms, 9 (7.82%) lived in dependent houses with 4 rooms , 13 (11.30) lived with the husband family were they share the house with other relative of the husband. It was also found that 47 families 30.32% had a medium of communications in their houses like TV, newspapers and internet.

Most of the abused woman 71 (61.73%) had a force marriage, 28 (24.34%) had arrange marriage, 8 women 6.95% got marriage against their families wish, 8 (6.95%) were in love with their husband before marriage, 85 (73.91%) had an engagement time with their husband before marriage.

Table 1  
Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents and their Husbands

Variable	Women		Husband		x <sup>2</sup>	df	p
	n=115	%	n=115	%			
<b>Age group</b>					7.872	3	0.049
15-24	46	40	33	28.69			
25-34	31	26.95	48	41.73			
35-44	26	22.60	28	24.34			
45-54	12	10.43	6	5.21			
<b>Age at marriage</b>					4.013	3	0.260
15-20	51	44.34	48	41.73			
21-25	34	29.65	35	30.43			
26-30	28	24.34	24	20.86			
Above 30	2	1.73	8	6.95			
<b>Place of birth</b>					0.802	3	0.802
Urban	44	38.60	41	35.65			
Rural	21	18.26	23	20			
Bedouin	15	13.04	19	16.52			
Refugees camp	35	30.43	32	28.82			
<b>Level of Education</b>					0.784	3	0.853
12 class & below	70	60.86	71	61.73			
Diploma	26	22.60	24	20.8			
Undergraduate	17	14.78	16	13.91			
Graduate	2	1.73	4	3.47			
<b>Profession</b>					66.543	3	0.000
Unemployed (housewife)	81	70.43	21	18.26			
Daily wage work	24	20.86	52	45.21			
(irregular) Govt. employee	6	5.21	34	29.56			
Private sector employee	4	3.47	8	6.95			

Table 2 present the distribution of abused women according to the time of assaulting , starting of violence , frequency of violence against them , causes of violence as perceived by the abused women , number of children woman have and whether they experienced violence in presents of their children or not . Majority of the assaulted women 76.65 % experienced violence in the night , in which 73.04% were under husband violence right from first year of marriage , 21 ( 18.21%) stated that they were exposed to violence from the 2-4 years after

Marriage . Most of them 44.34% faces violence every day, followed by 33.04% stated that they are exposed to violence at least once a week. 38 assaulted women 33.04% revealed that they don't know the reasons behind being abused and feel that there was no reason for the husband to assault them. Whereas majority of women who spoke about the reasons of violence 61 ( 79.22% ) spoke about the interference of the husband relatives were behind the violence they face , followed by 75.32% revealed that violent discipline was the reason of violence against them by the husband , and ineffective communication between family members ( 53.24% ) . Results also showed that 78 (67.82%) of the abused women had between 1-4 children's, and also 87 (75.65%) of the assaulted women experienced violence in the presence of their children.

Table2: Distribution of the respondents according to the time, starting, frequency, causes of violence, no. of children & presence of children when violence occur

Variable	Abused woman	
	N=115	%
Time of violence		
Day time	28	24.34
Night time	87	75.65
Starting the incident of violence & its continuity		
First year if marriage	84	73.04
Starting 2-4 years ago	21	18.21
Starting 5-7 years ago	6	5.21
Starting 7 and more years ago	4	3.47
Frequency of violence		
Daily	51	44.34
Weekly	38	33.04
Monthly	18	15.65
Yearly	5	4.34
Irregular	3	2.60
Causes of violence*		
No. reason/ I don't know	38	33.04
Financial problem	35	45.45
Alcoholic	18	23.37
Relatives interferences	61	79.22
Problem with his work	21	27.27
Low self esteem	14	18.18
No love and respect	39	50.64
Ignorant	40	51.94

Sexually not satisfied	24	31.16
Cultural differences	19	24.67
Educational differences	7	9.09
Family isolation	31	40.25
Ineffective communication between family member	41	53.24
Violent disciplines	58	75.32
No. of children		
1-4	78	67.82
5-8	33	28.69
9 & more	4	3.47
Violence occur in presence of children		
Yes	87	75.65
No	28	24.34

\*77 women revealed that there are more than one reason

To have deep evaluation of women assaulted by their husband, the characteristics of the husband were investigated. Table 3 present these characteristics. Majority of women 58.26% said that their husband do not practice violence against their children's. Whereas 41.73% of them revealed that the husbands do use physical violence against the children in the family. 81 abused women 70.43 % reported that the husband's family has the history of practicing violence against family members particularly female. In view of husband bad habits 65.21 % of the women indicated that their husbands had bad habits like, being out of the house till late night, playing card most of the time, drinking alcohol. They also revealed that 57.39% of their husband uses abusive language against them and other family members. We also found that 38 assaulted women 33.04% said that their husband behave well with them when they are not demanding, 28 9 24.34% when they take care of their husbands, and the husbands behave politely with them when they wanted sex. Most of the women indicated that their husbands had no sexual problem and they are fit and satisfied (74.04%).

Table3: Husband characteristic of abused woman

Variable	<u>Abused woman</u>	
	N=115	%
Husband practice violence against children		
Yes	48	41.73
No	67	58.26
Husband family practice violence		
Yes	81	70.43
No	34	29.56

Husband have bad habits		
Yes	75	65.21
No	40	34.78
Husband verbal communication with family member		
Polite language	15	13.04
Abusive language	66	57.39
Not stable	34	29.56
Time when husband behave well with woman		
When not demanding	38	33.04
When house clean	7	6.08
When take care of him	28	24.34
When she keep fresh meal ready	13	11.30
While he is drunk	5	4.34
When he demand sex	24	20.86
Dose husband have sexual problem		
Yes ( early ejaculation , erection problem ...)	31	26.95
No ( he is fit and satisfied )	84	74.04

Table 4 shows the assaulted women reaction to violence and the out come and impact of violence on the abused women, it also shows how long time took them to pursuit their normal life after experiencing physical violence by their husbands. Out of 115 assaulted women only 40 (34.78%) reacted to violence by different ways, and majority 65.21% do not react to violence because they were either afraid or they have to bear the assaulting for the sake of children's and to avoid social stigma.

Table 4 also shows that the impact of violence according to medical examination by forensic departments, where 61(53.04%) were suffering of scratches and bruises, followed by 9.56% had cuts in their bodies. It also revealed that only 14(12.17%) of the abused women had no lesions. 65(56.52%) indicated that it took them 1-10 days to pursuit their normal life, followed by 21.73% revealed that they could come back to normal life after 11-20 days of the incident of violence. Most of the assaulted women 87.82 % got medical report of what impact of violence have seen on their bodies.

## Discussion

This study aimed to examine and evaluate the characteristics of physical violence against women in the Jordanian society. Out of 167 assaulted women who were conducted only 115 women agreed to participate in this study. This study shows that 68.86% of women who were conducted spoke about their suffering of being



assaulted. And the rest of women refuse to share their experience of being abused with anyone. This may indicate that there are many cases of violence against women in the Jordanian society are still hidden and unknown. This happen because women either they are afraid of speaking out their experience and to avoid the social stigma. And for many this is consider to be as family matter one should not share with anyone. The finding of this study are congruent with other studies carried out by (Al-Matalka,2009,2012,Al-Badayneh,2005,2012,Haj-Yahia,1998b,2000a) .

The finding of this study shows that most of the assaulted women and their husband's were married at an early age. This may reflect the fact that an early age marriage may lead to family problems (Al-Matalka, 2009).

Results shows that majority of women and their husband's were born in urban and refugees camp, which indicate that violence may occur in these areas more than the rural and Bedouin areas. This also may indicate two hypothesis, The first is that people in rural and bedouin areas are still bond with kinship and family ties and the violence against women may lead to interference of the women relatives at any times. The second hypothesis is that because of the kinship and family bond woman may hide the incidents of violence from relatives. And the culture in these areas prohibit the individual to speak about family problems and consider violence against women as a private matter one should not share it with outsider (Araji&Carlson,2001;Khawaja,2004;Faramarzi,et al,2005).

As the educational background is concern, the study shows that majority of the abused women and their husbands who assaulted them did not complete their education and had education up to twelve class even less than twelve class. This indicates that those people who are not educated are more exposed to behave violently with each other and they belong to lower educated family. This may be as an indicator for those who are involved in finding solutions to the violence in the family for the importance of education in the life of many women and men who are being a victim or involved in family violence (Matalka, 2009; Balci & Ayranci, 2005).

Low family income is one major reason for domestic violence. The findings show that most of the women are unemployed or working in irregular income and also their husbands had no regular income. Family with no income or no fix income are more exposed to violence, but not limited to them because violence against women occur in all society in respect of their class , cast , religion , and their socioeconomic status . The finding of this study is congruent with the study carried out by (WHO, 2001; NCFA, 2005; Nasser, 1998).

In the current study , majority of the abused women had a force marriage (61.73% ) and (24.34%) had arrange marriage .This study highlighted the effect of this type of marriage on the future of women with her unwanted husband's especially when we come to know that most of them got married at an early age. We found that these women are in bad relation with their husband's.

In our study, we found that majority of women 75.65% were abused at night. These because husband's usually are outside the houses during day time and they face stress in their work and when communicate with others ,and they release t5his stress when they are back home particularly with their wives. And also it may reflect some of the causes of violence such as, economical condition of the family. In such houses violence is not limited to particular time or period. We found that 24.34% of the violence cases occurred on day time also. These findings are in accordance with the study carried out by Balci&Ayranci (2005).

The results of our study also revealed that most of the incidents of assaulting began at the first year of marriage 74.04%. This may due to lack of effective communication between the couples, the impact of forcing women for unwanted marriage at an early age and as results not giving them the opportunity to continue their education. More over the feeling of financially depending on others like relatives may post the feeling of frustration among couples which lead to violence. Our study revealed that 44.34% of women experience violence everyday and 33.04 % suffer of assaulting at least once weekly. The findings of this study are congruent with the other studies carried out by Al-Matalka (2009, 2012).

This study revealed that, women spoke about more than one reason for violence in which the most encountered causes was relative interferences 79.22% , and violent discipline 75.32% . This may support the fact that the Jordanian social culture accepts the use of violence with women as a kind of discipline, and this acceptance is supported by cultural and social norms. And violence against women in the Jordanian society can be seen as practicing masculine power, to achieve power and control over the wife or a method of family(wife) discipline (Al-Badayneh,2005 a, 2012).



One of the most important factors that may contribute to domestic violence and significantly affect violence against women was the husband's characteristics. We feel that this may be due to stress, low self esteem, feeling of helpless lack of confidence, weakness, feeling of being worthless, irresponsible, can't meet the demand of the family, not able to adjust between his responsibility as a husband and a son to his parents. These factors together or separated definitely influence the morality of man and may find his way in violence against his wife.

Majority of the abused women 67.82% had 1-4 children, in which 75.65% indicated that their husband's assaulted them in the presence of the children's, and 41.73% of their husbands do practice violence against children. These results may indicate that unhealthy home where violence is used as a mean of discipline will not excluded any member in the family. This fact is supported by the study carried out by McKay (1994).

The findings also shows that 57.39% of the assaulted women husband's uses abusive language when they communicate with family members particularly wife. This indicates the manner and the style of communication men follow with their wives and children. These findings are in congruent with the findings of previous studies (Al-Matalka, 2008; Thoennes&Tjaden, 1990).

The results also revealed that most of women 33.04% stated that their husband behave well with them when they don't ask him for things and not demanding, 24.34% when they take care of the husband, and 20.86% revealed that husband are well behaved when they wanted sex. This may indicate that even the women under study bear the responsibility of violence that fallen on them to some extent. This also indicates that couples may lack communicational skills with each others. Most of the abused women 74.04% stated that their husband are sexually fit and satisfied and 26.95% indicated that their husband's had sexual problems, such as, early ejaculation and erection problems. This may lead to another fact that physical violence may happened with other type of violence like sexual and psychological violence as a result of man feeling of being sexually ineffective and this feeling lead to physical violence as a way of proving his manhood. These findings are in accordance with the findings of (Al-Matalka, 2009; Balci&Ayranci, 2005).

In view of women reaction to violence, impact of violence and how much time took the assaulted women to pursuit their normal life, the findings of our study revealed that majority 65.21% did not react to the violence by anyway, because they are afraid, for the sake of children, got use to violence, giving chance to husband to change, feeling of violence as a private matter and avoiding negative consequences of social stigma. This indicate that there are many cases of violence against women are not discovered in the Jordanian society, were the culture and norms accept violence against women as a way of discipline. However, hurting the individual or harming them is not accepted in Islamic religion. The results of this study is similar to other studies that investigated violence against women (Al-Matalka, 2009, 2012; Al-badayneh, 2005 a, 2012; Nasser, et al, 1998; Hadidi&Jahshan, 2001).

In our study, 53.04% of the abused women had scratches and bruises all over the body, followed by cuts 9.56%, injuries to the eyes, ears and nose 8.69%. This finding is in congruent with other studies which show the impact of physical violence on women that leads to psychological and social consequences. It was found that the percentage of women subjected to physical and verbal violence within the family was much higher than the percentage of other women in term of constant anxiety, grim future and hopelessness, sadness and unrest, pessimism, insecurity, and lack of goal in life. It also negatively affect all members of the family who are brought up in hostility and discord environment, and prevent them of developing in a natural ways. This also, increases the chances of divorce, broken homes, and the occurrence of other social turmoil (Al-Matalka, 2008, 2009, 2012; NCFA, 2005; Shakhathreh, et al, 2005; Darweesh, 2001).

Violence against women has received growing attention at the United Nations as a form of discrimination and a violation of women's human rights. The international community has committed itself to protecting the rights and dignity of individual women and men through numerous treaties and declarations (UNGA, 2006).

Violence against women is one of the most widespread human rights and public health problem. Therefore there is a need for a comprehensive response in order to have some control over the problem. There should be effective efforts at all level to tackle the problem in the Jordanian society. We suggest the following measures:

1-Promoting awareness among people so that to know the affect of violence against women.

2-Raising awareness among community leaders, youth and children so that to take action against violence and make it unacceptable.

3-Government and Non-Governmental organization services must spread more to reach all areas in the country.

4-Domestic violence should be taught in school and universities.

5-More research to investigate the problems and the cultural effects on violence particularly in rural and bedouin areas.

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